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Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour ... *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

March Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term March average:

Great Lakes Basin	61%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	62%
Lake Superior	54%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	46%
Lake Ontario	121%

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Water Supplies Below Average During March

Lake Erie Ice Boom Removal Delayed Past April 1

Water supplies to all of the Great Lakes were below average during March. Water supplies to Lakes Michigan-Huron were particularly low.

The water levels of all of the Great Lakes remain below average. The levels of Lakes Superior and Michigan-Huron are below Chart Datum and are about 21 and 12 cm below their levels of one year ago, respectively. While also below average, levels on Lakes St. Clair, Erie and Ontario began April about 2, 11 and 5 cm higher than last year, respectively.

Lake Superior levels continued to decline as they usually do during March. Lake Superior began April about 37 cm below its long-term average. The lake was about 31 cm below Chart Datum and just 17 cm above the lake's 1926 record low for the beginning of April.

The monthly mean level of Lakes Michigan-Huron stayed the same from February to March rather than rising as it usually does. At the beginning of April, Lakes Michigan-Huron were 60 cm below their long-term average and 22 cm below Chart Datum. Lakes Michigan-Huron have not been lower at this time of year since the mid-1960s, although they are still 21 cm above their record low of 1964.

Daily levels on Lake St. Clair fluctuated throughout the month of March. The lake's monthly mean level increased by 1 cm from February to March. Lake St. Clair began April about 30 cm below average.

Daily levels on Lake Erie increased 7 cm during March - about one-half the average amount. Daily levels on Lake Ontario increased 12 cm during the month, just 3 cm less than average. Due to gains made late in February, however, both lakes experienced month-to-month increases 2 cm higher than average from February to March. At the beginning of April, Lakes Erie and Ontario were 17 and 4 cm below average, respectively.

Montréal Harbour's mean level was 5.99 m in March, 109 cm lower than the 1967-2000 long-term average for March, and a new record low monthly mean level for the month.

Note: These figures are preliminary.

March Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term March average:

Lake Superior 80%

Lake Erie 97%

Lake Huron 87%

Lake Ontario 96%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Ice Conditions Delay Removal of Lake Erie Ice Boom Past April 1

Ice cover conditions on the eastern end of Lake Erie and the amount of ice below Niagara Falls, delayed the removal of the Lake Erie Ice Boom beyond April 1. At the end of March, about 3160 square kilometres of ice cover remained on the eastern basin. In addition, there was an ice bridge (or jam) in the Maid-of-the-Mist Pool located below Niagara Falls.

The current International Joint Commission Order of Approval governing the operation of the ice boom requires that all floating sections of the boom be opened by the first day of April unless there is more than 650 square kilometres of ice in eastern Lake Erie. Other factors such as the quality of ice, ice build-up in the river above and below Niagara Falls or in the lower Niagara River, or unfavourable weather predictions must also be considered.

Representatives of the International Niagara Board of Control will continue to monitor the ice conditions to determine when boom opening can commence. The earliest ice boom opening was on March 5, 1998 and the latest was May 3, 1971. Last year, removal began on March 23.

Water Level Outlook

Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

The levels of all of the Great Lakes are expected to begin or continue their seasonal rise during April. A significant snowpack remains on the Lake Superior basin and the northern and eastern portions of the Lakes Huron and Ontario basins. The anticipated runoff from snowmelt should help fuel the seasonal rise on these lakes. However, if low total water supply conditions should prevail, levels on all lakes, with the exception of Ontario, could remain about the same or even decline during April. For example, while levels on Lake Erie have increased for the past two months as a result of an early snowmelt over much of its basin, the lake's seasonal rise may stall once runoff conditions diminish. Please refer to the Monthly Water Levels Bulletin for the forecast of the probable range of water levels on each lake for the next six months.

St. Lawrence Board Holds Multi-City Teleconference

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control held a highly successful multi-city teleconference on March 20. More than 80 members of the public participated in the teleconference that connected the Board with Alexandria Bay and Rochester, New York, Cornwall and Toronto, Ontario and Montréal, Quebec. Those attending not only had the opportunity to express local views and concerns, but also hear the views and concerns from other sites.

Remember that the St. Lawrence Board and other IJC Board web sites can be accessed at: http://www.ijc.org/.

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